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BOOK REVIEWS

Ancient, Curious, and Famous Wills. By Virgil M. Harris, Lecturer on Wills in St. Louis University. Boston. Little, Brown & Co., 1911. pp. xiii, 472.

This work contains a most interesting and valuable collection of wills, ancient, curious and famous. It is well arranged, and the reader finds much food for thought within its pages. Here the reader's attention is directed to the fact that a person's writings comprise one of the clearest and most lasting mirrors of his character. The vagaries of the human mind appear in strong relief in many of the curious wills which have been placed in this collection. The author has collected about five hundred wills, commencing with the dawn of creation, the traditional will of our father Adam, and closing with that very modern will of Mary Baker G. Eddy. The most valuable portion of the work when considered as an aid in drawing testamentary documents is that part of the work which contains the wills of famous Americans and famous foreigners. Some of these wills are excellent and can well serve as models, while others show a surprising lack of knowledge of what formalities are necessary for a properly drawn will and contain many things which should never be placed in a will. In his first chapter the author discusses the importance of the last will and testament and gives many practical suggestions as to what a will should contain and points out the pitfalls to be avoided. The work is one which has required careful study, and exhaustive research and labor on the part of the author. As it is most interesting and instructive, it should appeal to the members of the legal profession and individuals who are interested in tracing history and customs as they are portrayed in the wills of people of the various ages.

Commentaries on the Law of Municipal Corporations. By John Forrest Dillon, LL.D. Fifth Edition, Revised and Enlarged. Five Volumes, cix, 3812. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1911.

The learned and illustrious author of these Commentaries was born in Montgomery County, New York, on Christmas Day of 1831. Going to Iowa in early youth, he graduated in medicine from Iowa University, but soon gave up this profession for the

study of law. He was admitted to the Bar in 1852. He has held numerous appointive and elective offices, having been State prosecuting attorney 1852-1858, Judge of the Supreme Court of Iowa 1863-1869, and Judge of the United States Circuit Court, in the Eighth Judicial Circuit, 1869-1879. On this last mentioned date he resigned to accept the Professorship of Equity Jurisprudence in the Columbia Law School, which position he occupied until 1882, and since that time he has been engaged in the practice of his profession in New York City. He has always been a prominent member of the American Bar Association, and to them he has dedicated this present edition of his *Municipal Corporations*. In addition to this work, he is the author of a number of reports and treatises, notably of the "Law of Municipal Bonds," and the "Laws and Jurisprudence of England and America."

Twenty-one years after the publication of the fourth edition, and almost forty years after the unheralded appearance of the first edition of this standard treatise, Judge Dillon has given to the legal profession a fifth edition of his *Commentaries on the Law of Municipal Corporations*. No longer a modest one, or at most, two volume book, this monumental work has been more than doubled in size, and fills five large volumes. The first four volumes contain the text and notes, while the fifth is a voluminous and exhaustive index to the whole, and list of cases cited.

Of course, this book is so well and favorably known to Bench and Bar, and has acquired such a deserved nation-wide reputation as an authority, that a criticism of it by this reviewer would amount to presumption. A review must therefore necessarily consist mainly in drawing attention to its manifold advantages and good points, and this is a task that affords a large amount of pleasure and profit to the reviewer as well as to the reader.

One of the most noticeable features of the work is its attractive appearance, internal as well as external. Judge Dillon tells us that among his chief aims has been to confer a real benefit upon the legal world, by making this book of positive benefit to the practitioner. Accordingly, we find its arrangement simple, with copious indices and chapter-head-notes throughout, which make it as valuable a reference book in the court room as in the office. The progress of the book, from the interesting and sug-

gestive preliminary chapter upon the historical beginnings of municipal government, to the highly specialized chapters upon minute details of municipal legislation and juristics, reveals a treatise that for clarity and breadth of view cannot be surpassed among our American legal authors.

Quite noticeable also is the large amount of space devoted to the foot-notes. The author has well carried out his purpose of making the book as useful to the village lawyer who is denied access to a good law library, as to the urban counsel with the libraries of the world at his fingertips. This result has not come from a dependence upon unsupported general and abstract statements, but from notes which are full enough to be quoted, and from frequent discussion of the leading cases. The notes are brought up to date, and their invaluable character is a truism to the working lawyer.

Space fails for a description of many other excellent features of the work, notably the scholarly completeness of the treatment, the suggestions of uniformity of laws raised in certain chapters, and the broadening vision apparent even from a comparison of the last two editions of the treatise. The work is, and will remain for many years to come, a standard of the American bar. Taking it all in all, it is certain that the verdict of the legal world will be that the distinguished author has amply satisfied that Baconian debt to his profession, which he has labored so long and so well to repay.

C. R. W.